

16-05-070 Signs That Require a Permit

(a) **PURPOSE-STREETSCAPE.** The streetscape is the combination of vehicles, buildings, signs, landscaping, roads, utility poles, etc., that dominate the view of the driver or pedestrian. The streetscape tells residents and visitors how the County as a whole feels about the environment, safety, aesthetics, and its sense of order, among other things. A useful, attractive, and safe streetscape is one that necessarily regulates the size, location, and design of business signs. Because a proliferation of poorly designed, oversized, and inappropriately located signs in commercial and industrial areas can be detrimental to the achievement of effective, safe and attractive streetscapes, it is important that the permanent signs in these areas receive approval (permits) from the County.

Commercial and industrial uses are generally more intensive than those found in residential zones. Since these uses are designed by size, location, and style to attract attention and provide services to the public, they generally need signage to achieve that end. Business signs of any kind in residential neighborhoods can diminish the quality of life for which those zones were specifically created. However, there may be some residential uses which merit a sign, though much smaller and subdued than in commercial or industrial zones.

Therefore, it is the intent and purpose of this section to outline regulations and design standards for signs in both commercial/industrial and residential areas that will allow the business to identify itself while allowing Morgan County to create and maintain safe and aesthetically pleasing streetscapes regardless of zone.

(b) **SIGN THEME REQUIRED.** All multi-tenant centers/buildings must submit a proposal for all on-premise signs to the Planning Commission for design and placement approval. In cases for parcels of land of 7 acres or larger, and with frontage of 300 feet or more, a proposal for the overall design and placement of all on-premise signs may be submitted. Such signs may vary from the regulation set forth herein and shall be considered as a conditional use; providing there is a determination that the proposed sign exceptions are not in conflict with the purpose and intent of this Chapter and are in architectural harmony with uses adjacent to the development and with the understanding existing signage may be required to be altered or removed.

(c) **ON-PREMISE FREESTANDING SIGNS.** The size and height of freestanding signs are allowed as follows:

(1) Planned centers or parcels less than 1 acres. No freestanding signs allowed. Only monument signs are allowed unless a conditional use permit is issued by the Planning Commission.

(2) One acre or more. The Community Development Department may approve one freestanding sign per street frontage. No freestanding sign shall be allowed for any planned center or parcel that has less than 100 feet of street frontage. Sign height may not exceed 25 feet. Signs must be at least 25 feet from the corner. Sign area may not exceed 50 square feet.

(3) Reader boards, changeable copy areas and electronic message centers are allowed but are discouraged. No such device shall exceed 50% of the total sign copy area of the sign.

(d) **MONUMENT SIGNS.** The following standards shall apply:

(1) Monument signs are allowed for any size parcel provided that the parcel has 30 feet of street frontage. The sign area allowed is 32 sq. ft. Parcels with two street frontages are allowed a sign on each street. However, the signs must be separated by at least 100 feet as measured diagonally across the property from center to center of both signs or only one (1) sign will be allowed. Signs within the clear view area of the corner are prohibited.

(2) Reader boards (changeable copy areas) and electronic message centers may be allowed, however, such devices shall not exceed 50% of the total sign area.

(e) **WALL SIGNS.** Wall signs should be the primary form of identification for business uses in the County. Each business is entitled to one wall sign if the following criteria are met:

(1) The sign may not occupy more than 15% of the flat wall area.

(2) Painted signs applied directly to the building face, must have specific approval of the Community Development Department.

(3) Wall signs with changeable copy, reader board, or electronic message capability are not allowed.

(4) Buildings or businesses with exposure on the side(s) and front may choose which wall to mount their sign upon. Signs are allowed on the rear of the building with Planning Commission approval.

(5) A sign on a third and fourth wall must be approved by the Planning Commission.

(6) Owners of buildings that have small offices inside, accessory and/or secondary to the main use are required to create a building identification sign instead of trying to obtain signage of every tenant. This is

especially true for buildings with two or more levels.

(7) Wall signs on sloping roofs shall be erected so as to appear as a sign applied to similarly vertical wall surface and finished in such a manner that the visual appearances from all sides is such that they appear to be part of the building itself. All such signs shall be installed or erected in such a manner that there is no visual support structure such as guy wires or braces.

(8) No part of any wall sign or of the sign structure shall project above or below the highest or lowest part of the wall upon which the sign is mounted or painted.

(9) No wall sign including any light box or structural part, shall project more than 18 inches from the face of the building to which it is attached.

(f) **SUSPENDED SIGNS.** Suspended signs used in place of wall signs are allowed if the architecture of the building or planned center lends itself to that design and a sign theme is submitted and approved. The following shall apply:

(1) The Community Development Department must review any proposal for a suspended sign for compatibility with the building.

(2) Any sign may not exceed 15% of the flat wall of the tenant space.

(3) No sign may project beyond the outside limit of the arcade, marquee, or canopy or facade to which they are attached.

(4) Any sign must have at least an 8 foot clearance above the sidewalk or 7 feet above any landscaped area.

(5) There must be a minimum horizontal distance of 5 feet on both sides between suspended signs.

(g) **AWNING SIGNS.** Awning signs are allowed only under the following circumstances:

(1) The Community Development Department may approve any applicant for an awning sign which fully complies with sign standards.

(2) Awning signs in planned centers must be designed to conform to an approved sign theme.

(3) No awning signs will be allowed on multi-tenant buildings or in planned centers unless the building or center has consistent treatment.

(4) Awning signs shall be limited to single story buildings or to the first level only of multi-story buildings.

(5) Awning signs must function as true awnings by being placed over a doorway, window, or walkway to protect such from the elements.

(6) Awning signs are not allowed on or above sloping or mansard roof.

(7) The area of awning signs shall be a maximum of 15% of the primary wall upon which the sign is mounted. Awning signs for secondary walls are limited to 5% of the wall area.

(8) Area of copy/logo on awnings shall be limited to 40% of the awning. Illuminated signs on other sides of the building shall be permitted.

(9) Awning signs shall conform to the Uniform Building Code governing such structures.

(10) Illuminated (backlit), translucent, vinyl awnings are not permitted. Translucent letters or accents sewn into opaque canvas or acrylic awnings are permitted.

(11) Awning signs shall not project out from the wall more than 8 feet, nor less than 2 feet. In the case of entrance canopies the awning may project out from the building over a walkway and must lead to a bona fide business entrance. Such canopies will be permitted if they are compatible with the architecture of the building.

(12) Awning signs shall not project above the roof line, defined as the highest part of the vertical wall.

(13) Awning signs shall maintain a minimum clearance of 7 feet to the bottom of the valance and 8 feet to the frame above the sidewalk and comply with all other clearance requirements.

(14) Awning signs shall be maintained in a clean, safe and attractive condition. Failure to do so will result in revocation of the sign permit.

(h) **CANOPIES (GAS STATIONS).** Signs for canopies over gas islands are regulated as follows:

(1) Sign copy, corporate logos, etc, may be a maximum of 15% of one face of the canopy.

(2) Up to 3 sides of the canopy may be used for signs.

(3) The height to the top of the canopy may not exceed 20 feet from grade and no canopy fascia may exceed 4 feet in height.

(4) Individual letters, logos, or symbols may not exceed 4 feet in height or project out from the surface

of the canopy more than 18 inches or project above or below the canopy face.

(5) Gas price signs are allowed on the monument sign or below the canopy over the pumps. One double faced sign for each type of fuel sold is allowed per gas island with a maximum of 4 sets per station. Area of said sign may not exceed 4 square feet each.

(i) ILLUMINATION.

(1) Sign illumination may be cast directly onto the face of the sign; provided that such illumination does not adversely affect pedestrian and/or vehicular traffic. Whenever a sign face is illuminated by an external source, light shall be concentrated on the sign face. The amount of light cast to the areas other than the sign shall be reduced to the extent possible. All external illumination sources shall be shielded from public view. On all internally illuminated freestanding, wall mounted and projecting signs, light shall be transmitted only through the material that comprise the letters located within the display area. No interior light source shall be visible to the exterior. No sign shall contain copy which consists of illuminated bulbs or individual lights or light sources.

(2) Lighting for all exterior signs, whether lettering is internally back lighted or light is cast onto the face of the sign, shall comply with the lighting standards established herein.